



## **NEWS RELEASE**

Tennessee Regulatory Authority

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\*Consumer Advisory\*

### **TRA Advises Tennessee Consumers Of Higher Natural Gas Prices**

**Nashville, Tennessee** – In light of widespread predictions that users of natural gas will pay 30 to 50 percent more this winter than last to heat their homes, the Tennessee Regulatory Authority (TRA) strongly advises consumers to begin taking steps now towards energy conservation.

In formal presentations to the TRA, three of Tennessee's regulated natural gas companies were unanimous in their forecast that natural gas prices will increase and discussed their plans to inform their customers of the reasons behind the change in prices – insufficient supply, increased demand, and the recent devastation in the Gulf Coast caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

“Obviously consumers cannot control the market and environmental forces that affect the availability of natural gas,” says TRA Chairman Ron Jones. “However, consumers can certainly do their part in conserving energy and making sure their homes are prepared for the colder months.”

Among the steps consumers can take to conserve energy are:

- Seal leaks around doors, windows, and other openings such as pipes or ducts with caulk or weather stripping.
- Install a programmable thermostat and set it to accurately follow your at-home and away-from home schedule.
- Have your furnace and gas appliances serviced annually by a qualified contractor to ensure safety and maximum energy efficiency
- Effectively use draperies, awnings, blinds, or shutters on all windows by keeping window coverings open on sunny days to capture the sun's warmth and closing them at night to insulate against the cold.
- Put on your favorite sweater and set your thermostat between 65 and 70 degrees.
- Refrain from heating unused rooms.
- Lower the temperature on your hot water heater to 120 degrees.
- If you are not using your fireplace as a source of heat, be sure to close the damper.

Chairman Jones acknowledges that the forecasted spike in natural gas prices could put a tremendous strain on most household budgets and encourages consumers to check with their natural gas provider about service termination policies and special billing programs, such as budget billing or equal payment plans.

Under such special billing programs, a household's gas costs are estimated based on previous usage and billed in 11 equal payments. At the end of the 11 month payment period, the account is "settled up" by looking at the billed amount versus the actual usage.

If the household used more natural gas than was estimated, the customer will be required to pay the difference at year's end. If the household used less than was estimated, the customer will receive a refund or a credit to their account.

For more energy savings tips and information about the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), visit [www.state.tn.us/tra](http://www.state.tn.us/tra).

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